

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 21, 2005

Department of Consumer Affairs Highlights California Mediation Week With 'Consumer Days' at Shopping Malls throughout the State

Got a gripe about a home computer repair? Is your car still not fixed despite a visit to the shop? Are you a business owner trying to resolve a customer's complaint, but getting nowhere?

You might give the Complaint Mediation Program a try. The California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) program recovered more than \$21 million for consumers over the last 10 years in the form of refunds or additional service.



In an effort to highlight this important program, as well as similar complaint resolution programs across the state, the third week of March has been designated as California Mediation Week for the last 12 years.

"Mediation is a vital component for the protection of California consumers," said DCA Director Charlene Zettel. "I would urge anyone involved in a dispute to consider using this important resource."

To highlight its program, DCA will hold "Consumer Days" March 22-24 at several shopping malls in Northern and Southern California. Complaint Mediation staff will be available to receive complaints, explain DCA services and provide referrals to other agencies if necessary. Bilingual staff will also be available to assist Spanish-speaking consumers.

DCA's Complaint Mediation Program processes all customer complaints filed against California businesses that are regulated by the following DCA bureaus: Automotive Repair, Cemetery and Funeral, Electronic and Appliance Repair, Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation, Hearing Aid Dispensers, and Security and Investigative Services. The program mediates 10,000-15,000 complaints a year.

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With its emphasis on resolution rather than confrontation, mediation benefits both consumers and businesses in maintaining their relationship.

“The program seeks to find a mutually acceptable resolution between consumers and businesses. The mediators can propose terms to settle disputes, but do not dictate settlement terms,” Zettel noted.

In addition to its own program, DCA oversees mediation programs in 31 California counties.

“Consumer Days” will be held at the following locations:

- **Northern California**

Westfield Downtown Plaza Mall, Sacramento

Tuesday, March 22, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Bayfair Center, San Leandro

Tuesday, March 22, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Southland Mall, Hayward

Thursday, March 24, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m (A Tagalog speaker will be available to help consumers at this location)

- **Southern California**

Montclair Plaza, Montclair

Wednesday, March 23, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Ontario Mills Mall, Ontario,

Tuesday, March 22, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Montebello Town Center, Montebello

Tuesday, March 22, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 23, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 24, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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